871 177 Nevertheless, the school remains, in the eyes of the villagers, as a rallying point for ties with Japan.

No attempts have been made until the present to introduce Okinawan culture other than by a few occasional references to Okinawan history or folklore. Teachers, during discussion of reading material, refer to home life, farm work and mountain work to illustrate points made in the books.* School is the first opportunity for Taira children to become acquainted with the world outside their own village and to relate their own experiences to the rest of the island, Japan, and other parts of the world. Since Japan is the dominant subject of reading material, however, it is clear that no awareness of being "Okinawan" is developed. [186]

875 [554] Teachers, many of whom are young, are devoted to their work and to the children, even though their pay is hardly commensurate with their high status in the community and does not represent adequate compensation for the long hours of teaching and administrative work that demand most of their time. In addition, the community in which the teacher lives makes demands on him as one of the educated, able leaders. Both men and women teach. Some of the younger ones who follow the urgent call for teaching positions do not have much training beyond a high school diploma. During the summer, special teacher training courses are now conducted by university professors from Japan and the University of the Ryukyus. Graduates from the University of the Ryukyus Education Department are still too few in number to reach a remote country school, such as the one in Kawata. Most teachers come from one of the surrounding communities; others, mostly bachelors, are from other parts of the island. Children are therefore well acquainted with many of the school teachers, some of whom are neighbors, relatives, or friends of the family. [874]

[554] The extremely modest appearance of teachers does not detract from their status and authority. The relationship between students and teachers is a mixture of respect, as dictated by custom, and intimacy, as a result of mutual affection. A conscientious teacher comes to know his students well during the school year and takes an active interest in them. Children can tell if a teacher is enthusiastic about his work and often establish a warm relationship with him. During our stay, the first two grades were divided into two sections, taught by women, while male teachers taught the upper four grades. 872

The school day starts at 8:30 with a study period before the formal meeting of the teacher and students on the open grounds in front of

* Some practical work in gardening begins in the upper elementary school classes. Only Junior High School students work in the fields as part of their curriculum.